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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 SARAJEVO 000444

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TAGS: [KCRM](#) [KJUS](#) [EUN](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [BK](#)
SUBJECT: BOSNIA: POLITICIANS BLAME INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY
FOR BREAKDOWN OF POLICE REFORM NEGOTIATIONS

REF: A. SARAJEVO 293
[1](#)B. 06 SARAJEVO 3271
[1](#)C. 06 SARAJEVO 2999 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: Ambassador Douglas L. McElhaney. Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: Taking diametrically opposed positions, Federation-based and Republika Srpska-based political leaders reached an impasse following a week of increasingly confrontational negotiations over adopting a Draft Implementation Plan for Police Reform (the "Implementation Plan") (REF. B). The OHR Principle Deputy High Representative (PDHR), German EU Presidency Ambassador and U.S. Ambassador tried to facilitate a compromise consistent with the three EU principles. However, Bosniak leaders rejected what they viewed as further dilution of the plan. Croat party heads took a neutral stance during discussions. The international community, particularly the High Representatives' office, came under heavy criticism in the media for appearing to make excessive concessions to RS Prime Minister Dodik, and also from Dodik, for allegedly siding with the Bosniaks. Council of Ministers Chair Spiric proved to be an ineffective mediator, unable (or unwilling) to focus the discussions. At this point, it appears unlikely the EU will be able to initial an SAA with Bosnia any time soon.
END SUMMARY.

[1](#)2. (U) Between February 16-24, BiH Council of Ministers Chair Nikola Spiric hosted a series of lengthy, increasingly contentious political negotiations on adopting the Police Reform Directorate's (PRD) Draft Implementation Plan for Police Reform (the "Implementation Plan") (REF. C). OHR, EU Special Representative, the German Ambassador (as EU Presidency representative) and U.S. Ambassador attended the sessions.

[1](#)3. (U) Serb leader Dodik said he was willing to make "significant concessions," e.g., accepting the state-level Ministry of Security's exclusive authority to set police policy and overall budget levels. However, embedding his devil in the details, he insisted that the RS Ministry of Interior control the implementation of that budget, and a "Ministerial Board" be created to choose the local police chiefs. The board would include political appointees such as the RS Minister of Interior. As OHR pointed out, these provisions directly undercut the three EU principles, i.e., no political interference with police, state-level legislative and budgetary control, and local police areas determined by operational efficiency, rather than political considerations.

[1](#)4. (U) Bosniak (SDA) leaders Sulejman Tihic and (SBiH) Haris Silajdzic, as well as Zlatko Lagumdzija, maintained that political agreement to accept the three EU principles had been reached in 2005, and that the current Implementation

Plan was "already a compromise, not the basis for a new compromise." HDZ-1990 head Martin Raguz and HDZ-BiH head Dragan Covic said they were willing to accept the report as-is. However, if there were a new discussion aimed at retaining the RS police in some form, the Croat parties would insist that the cantonal police receive the same consideration.

15. (C) In an effort to bridge the gap, the High Representative's office put forward a proposed addendum to the Implementation Plan, which allowed for a Ministerial Board with advisory functions. The parties were invited to comment on the draft addendum. (NOTE: The Ambassador had shared the addendum with Dodik in Banja Luka on February 20 in advance of the following session in the hopes that Dodik would see it as a way to save face in the RS while still accepting the essential reforms. END NOTE.) However, instead Dodik seized the opportunity to again undercut the Implementation Plan. At the February 21 talks, he suggested including language that effectively negated all three EU principles. At that point, Bosniaks Silajdzic and Tihic announced they would not participate in further discussions. It was clear the negotiations were at a stand-still.

16. (U) The February 23 session lasted only 10 minutes. Silajdzic and Tihic declined to attend and sent no party representatives. Lagumdzija declared the talks a farce and walked out. Dodik continued to bluster in the media that he was trying to find common ground, but not at the expense of his RS constituency. The High Representative sent a letter to all the parties encouraging them to continue trying to reach agreement, but insisting that the three principles were non-negotiable. (NOTE: Embassy has sent a copy of the joint letter to EUR/SCE.) Unfortunately, in the local media

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politicians portrayed this letter as further proof that the internationals were cow-towing to Dodik. At his meeting with Silajdzic on February 24, the Ambassador, together with the German and British ambassadors, urged him to remain engaged in the dialogue. Silajdzic appeared receptive, but made no specific commitments.

17. (C) COMMENT: These were negotiations in name only, as neither Dodik nor the Bosniak parties had any intention of bending on their respective positions. They preferred instead to posture to each other and in the media. In the first significant test of his leadership since becoming the Council of Ministers Chair, Spiric showed initiative in bringing the parties together to try to reach consensus on police reform. Unfortunately, he proved to be an ineffective, and not altogether neutral, mediator. While he made many emotional appeals to the group to reach a compromise, Spiric did not offer any substantive suggestions to move the discussion forward. More significantly, he seemed unwilling or unable to persuade Dodik to modify the RS stance.

18. (C) COMMENT (cont.): Bosniak politicians seized on the proposed addendum and the High Representative's letter to decry international bias towards placating Dodik. At the same time, Dodik used the documents as further proof the internationals were trying to impose conditions that favored the Federation at the RS's expense. After his key role in the successful Defense Reform process, Bosnian expectations were high that the Principle Deputy High Representative would salvage the floundering Police Reform process (REF. A), and the media singled him out for harsh criticism as this week unfolded. The Ambassador has supported the negotiations and remind the public that the political leaders, not the internationals, are responsible for the current impasse. Unfortunately, their headline-grabbing tactics overwhelmed efforts to explain the nuances of the High Representative's office's position, particularly with regard to the proposed addendum.

19. (C) COMMENT (cont.): Time is quickly running out, casting a huge shadow over chances that the EU and the Bosnian government will be able to initial an SAA agreement in the near future. The inter-party discussions might benefit from a cooling-off period at this point. During this time, Embassy will seek to impress upon key Bosnian leaders the negative implications for the SAA and Bosnia's future of their unwillingness to make progress, and already has begun to lobby major party leaders to meet in a closed session to try to find common ground. END COMMENT.
MCELHANEY